

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 761

IR 056 997 -

TITLE Home-School Links: Networking the Learning Community.
PUB DATE 1996-00-00
NOTE 13p.; Topic H in: Proceedings of the ITEC Virtual Conference: A Meeting of the Minds (Australia, 1996); see IR 056 989.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Information; *Computer Networks; *Educational Technology; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; Foreign Countries; Information Networks; Information Seeking; *Internet; Rural Education
IDENTIFIERS *Access to Technology; *Connectivity; Teacher Librarians

ABSTRACT

The topic of networking the learning community with home-school links is addressed in four papers: "Internet Access via School: Expectations of Students and Parents" (Roy Crotty); "The School Library as Community Information Gateway" (Megan Perry); "Rural Access to the Internet" (Ken Eustace); and "NetDay '96: Extending the Internet with Volunteers and Donations" (Steve Cisler). Highlights include: the teacher librarian role in making the parent and student expectations of the Internet more realistic, as well as developing guidelines for information searching by both students and staff; the computer network at John Paul College (Queensland, Australia); practical, technical and social issues around the topic of access and equity of Internet access for rural schools; and the role of volunteers and donations in extending the Internet to the community. (AEF)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

TOPIC H

HOME-SCHOOL LINKS: NETWORKING THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFORM
AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC
COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lyn Hay

James Henri

2A TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

INTERNET ACCESS VIA SCHOOL: EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Roy Crotty

Teacher Librarian, Bradbury Primary School, N.S.W. &
Vice-President, Australian School Library Association (NSW), Australia

In the preparation of this paper I contacted a number of colleagues who are teacher librarians in high schools, primary schools, public and private schools. I also posted a request on LM_NET, requesting the thoughts and ideas of people working in the field of Internet use as my searching of available journals had proven somewhat inadequate. There were many articles of how teachers and teacher librarians can use the Internet in their teaching practices and how training is essential for them if the most effective use is to be gained, but little could I find about what expectations the students bring with them and what the parents of the students expected about their children's use of the Internet. I would have expected that there be some recognition that at least our students may come with some prior knowledge, and so starting points for teaching practice and students' learning would have been established. It would be very dangerous to expect our students to have no knowledge of the Internet, especially because of the high media focus it often elicits.

In casting the net far and wide among my colleagues I hoped to gain as wide a perspective as possible and not to restrict the responses to the students and parents at my own school. My own expectation was that there would be a wide range of responses from both parent and student groups.

To my surprise the responses have been remarkably similar from all levels and areas. In summary, there was very little response from the parent groups, with the student responses being far more definite in what they expected. The student expectation really amounted to having access to almost everything they needed; from access to games, downloading software (primarily games), home shopping and, for the older ones, access to information sources. One Year 6 student likened the Internet to a phone book, where he could just dial-up to get access to anything he wanted.

This disparity in expectations surprised me, especially from the parent group. As I read the daily newspapers I come across what could be regarded as disturbing news items about the Internet at least a couple of times a month. A recent article in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* concerning a Web site known as 'The Crime Archives' began "The Internet has become a data base for murder", with other phrases including "a Who's Who of the serial killer scene... look for your favourite killer and check his or her standing on the serial killer hit list." Disturbing enough, but the article concludes with this most chilling request "They tried it, they liked it, they did it again! Send kill-mail to" Later in the same paper the use of the Internet for home shopping was espoused. A little confusion at least could be expected in the minds of the unknowing and I still thought a much stronger response would have been forthcoming, particularly about the so-called dangers lurking on the Net; pornographic material and plans to make home-made bombs being two which seem to crop up regularly. However, Kevin Richardson, Director of Information Technology in Schools for the NSW Department of School Education, probably summed it up best when, at a recent conference, he stated that parents are afraid to question the benefits of technology as questioning technology means questioning education. Is this then an acceptance by parents that teachers do know best and that they can feel safe in the belief that their children are in safe hands? Or maybe it is lack of knowledge? A colleague with considerable experience in Internet usage at a tertiary library related how a principal at her child's school was demonstrating the Internet to a parents' meeting. His knowledge appeared limited, and the parents obviously less so, but they just nodded approvingly. If the principal knows what he is doing, then why should we worry? Or is it, as Kevin Richardson also points out, that parents are happy that the children are happy when using computers.

But what of the students' expectations? A colleague commented that if this is the Information Age then our students are in the Nintendo Age. If the figures are correct showing that only 7% of primary school age students are uncomfortable with computers, then it could be reasonable to assume computers are seen as just another aspect of their life. They do not question their presence

nor do they feel frightened by them. Many young students may not remember a time when a computer was not an essential part of their home or school life. This familiarity, while having aspects that are most welcome, may lead some to over-anticipate the capabilities of the Internet.

Is there a danger here? May their expectations be a little unreal? Several respondents gave examples of students spending inordinate amounts of time searching the Net for answers to school assignments only to find the answers were available in books in their library. This has also been reported in major city newspapers where parents have attempted to assist their children by browsing the Net, only to discover a good reference librarian in the local library with the answer within minutes. The unstructured nature of material on the Net adds to these problems, so for effective research, one of the skills needed to be taught is that there is a time to use the Internet, a time to use a book, a time to use a CD-ROM encyclopedia, etc. Broadly speaking, the students were seeing the Internet as an activity and information space, and may wander somewhat aimlessly around in the hope of finding what information was necessary to meet their information needs. Students, and parents, without adequate training may lack the critical thinking skills to analyse the data they collect in order to produce useful information.

This is where the teacher librarian can have a major role in making the parent and student expectations more realistic. If the parents appear a little 'techno-ignorant' or even 'techno-phobic', information sessions at Parent and Citizen meetings, Open Days, etc. (open an Internet Cafe at your school!) when parents can be shown the true benefits of using the Internet by accessing what could be regarded as worthy Web Sites. Providing information in school newsletters as to useful and/or interesting sites to be bookmarked may also be of benefit to computer use at home, especially now that some schools are expecting students to use computers at both home and school and with some schools providing students with Internet access after school hours. It would also demonstrate the responsible approach being taken by the school.

But it is when working with students and teachers that the true benefit of the teacher librarian's role can be appreciated. The skills of the teacher librarian as an 'information specialist' to facilitate students' access to the information sources within the library and to connect globally to sources beyond the school precinct, will have a significant effect on students' learning. The teacher librarian's role to 'interconnect' information sources, curriculum and teaching practice can make utilising the Internet a more realistic learning environment, where students and teachers working together to achieve quality educational outcomes will become the important feature and the technology will be only a tool, not the focus, to achieve the desired outcomes. Activities such as the I*EARN program developed in Victorian schools are a perfect example of using information technology to construct a learning environment with quality outcomes.

The teacher librarian's role can also extend beyond the traditional role of management of library resources to include managing electronic information sources, developing guidelines for information searching by both students and staff, developing guides to 'quality' materials, keeping information sources current (as some Web sites do disappear), being involved in providing professional development for colleagues, looking for shortcuts, etc, but above all, providing new educational opportunities for students.

The Internet is a new technological phenomenon for most people and so the expectation is that people will vary from the techno-phobic to the techno-euphoric. 'What was wrong with good-old book-learning' some might say while others will have the attitude that if it is new then it must be good. Like most new things, the middle ground is often the most realistic path, and with proper and appropriate guidance from professional teachers, the maximum benefit will be gained.

Roy Crotty is Teacher Librarian at Bradbury Primary School in Bradbury, N.S.W., Australia and is Vice-President of the Australian School Library Association (NSW). Roy may be contacted via email at <crotty@mania.com.au>.

THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AS COMMUNITY INFORMATION GATEWAY

Megan Perry

Head of Information Services, John Paul College, Daisy Hill, Queensland, Australia

John Paul College is an independent, co-educational Pre-School to Year 12 day school, situated on the southern outskirts of Brisbane at Daisy Hill. The College was established in 1982 by the clergy and lay people of the district, and the present enrolment is in excess of 2,300 students. In addition, the College offers Community Education Courses and has just opened a Child Care Centre which accepts students from 6 weeks of age. Today John Paul College is the largest independent school in Queensland.

The Information Infrastructure has been under construction for five years and today includes access to 25 permanently mounted CD ROMs; numerous hard disk based titles; access to the World Wide Web through a 64K ISDN line; school based and Internet email facilities. At present there are 250 desktop machines and 1,300 notebook computers in the College.

The network is accessible in all classroom and offices of the College via the fibre optic backbone. Students may, with the purchase of a modem access the CD ROM network from home. Internet access has not been made available from home yet, although it is envisaged that we will conduct trials on home access to defined sites by the end of the year.

This web of resources gains its purpose and power because it is accessible not only in the Library, but in each classroom and office in the College and via modem from home. The network is used by students in Years 3 to 12. In the elementary school students from Pre-School to Year 2 use CD ROMs and hard disc based titles on stand alone computers. This thematic software is utilised to meet the specific needs of younger students. In addition a number of short term thematic CD ROMs, which suit the needs of students in Years 3 - 5, are moved on and off the network as themes dictate.

Access to the network from home allows students the flexibility of researching at home, and using the resources at a convenient time and place. The concept of independence of both time and space is fulfilled as students can access the system 24 hours per day.

Access to the network from home is a natural addition to the services offered by the Library Resource Centre. The Centre is open from 8 am until 7 pm, 3 days per school week, and from 8 am until 5 pm on the other 2 days. Students have access not only to the 70,000 item collection, but access to stand alone CD ROMs machines, and 20 high end multimedia machines as well as 10 OPACs, the Internet and the CD ROM network.

In 1990, the decision to place a notebook computer into the hands of each student above Year 4 was made, and today there are in excess of 1,300 notebook computers on campus each day. The notebooks can be attached to the network through adaptors, which are located in the classrooms, laboratories and the Library.

The CD ROM software used on the remote access system is CD NET, resident on a CITRIX server. Students are issued with individual log in and password data, relating to a unique phone number. The system operates on a dial back method so that only current students of the College access the system. Students are logged out after 20 minutes although they may dial back in to the system.

Issues that we have faced include; access made difficult by inadequate infrastructure of telecommunication providers in outlying suburbs; modems that are incompatible with the system; maintenance and upgrade of communications software; suitability and ability of products to work on the remote server; inability of sound functionalities to work on the remote system; and congestion during assignment times. In addition individual licence agreements on each product had to be sought.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In 1998 the College will open a remote campus at Lake Awonga near Gladstone in Queensland. This site will be technologically advanced incorporating the latest communications systems. The research and development for this site is well in hand and will impact on the present shape of the network and the dial in system.

It may be the case that with the convergence of data, systems, infrastructure, etc., our remote system will at best be an interim service. As a sizeable number of our students have desktop PCs at home, and access to multimedia titles bundled with their hardware, the need for the service may reach a plateau. In the interim students have access to a library that does not close, and resources that have been selected to suit their general academic needs.

Megan Perry is Head of Information Services at John Paul College in Daisy Hill, Queensland, Australia. Megan may be contacted via email at <teachlib@jpc.qld.edu.au>.

RURAL ACCESS TO THE INTERNET

Ken Eustace

Lecturer in Information Technology, School of Information Studies,
Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., Australia

ABSTRACT

As the continual growth of Internet use increases and its subsequent invasion of our culture proceeds in tandem, some issues in rural parts of Australia are not keeping pace. This discussion seeks to collate some of these issues as experienced by the participants and to define several positions about the practical, technical and social issues around the topic of access and equity of Internet access for rural schools in particular.

1. INTERNET ECOLOGY

The information chain (Eustace 1994) defines World-Wide Web service as a new form of ecology where food is replaced by information (Figure 1.). As rural communities strive to enter the information age, telecommunications services are under greater pressure to provide equitable quality and access, in contrast to the urban environment.

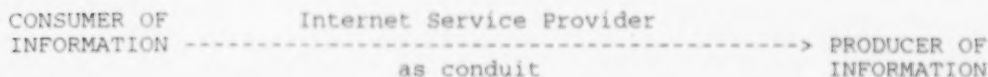


Figure 1. Consumers and Producers on the Internet spectrum

As rural users move towards the producer end of the spectrum (beyond maintaining a Home page), more time and resources are invested. Some key questions present some challenges and these are presented in the next two sections.

2. TECHNICAL ISSUES

Urban ISPs in Australia are now offering 64kbs ISDN links. In the USA, the 64kbs ISDN link is \$US295 p.a. - the same rate as the 28.8kbs modem link. The 128kbs service is twice the 64kbs rate at \$US590, with other ISDN services up to 512kbs. In stark contrast, rural Australia has many remote rural exchanges that cannot handle 2.4kbs modem rate!

1. Where does the Internet fit in with other systems such as videoconferencing, electronic classrooms, satellite communications and pay-TV services, currently available in schools?
2. What are the future intentions of Telstra, Optus and the new telecommunications players for developing rural/urban telecommunications?
3. Are Internet service providers (ISPs) to become the local Internet outlet, similar to video hire or do they face extinction from 'store front' Telstra and other companies?
4. What role do the education service providers (ESPs such as Department of School Education, Catholic Education Office etc) play and what is the status of current information technology initiatives across Australia?

5. Are such initiatives Internet-driven to the detriment of other areas of information technology?
6. Where is the nearest ISP and does it have special STD rates or a 13 number?
7. Where is the low road and the high road to the Information superhighway?
8. How can remote schools obtain and afford:
 - a 64kbs ISDN link or better?
 - an Internet server (WWW, email etc)?
9. What is an Intranet?
10. Why not build an Intranet server/Internet connection environment?
11. How can a firewall (proxy server) improve performance and security?

3. PRACTICAL ISSUES

Educators are embracing new teaching pedagogy trends all the time, however, here is a list of some trends that may be related to the development of a learning environment and a library enmeshed in Internet technology:

- interactive processes,
 - participation,
 - student control of learning,
 - distance independent learning,
 - communication in real time,
 - criterion-referenced assessment,
 - electronic publishing,
 - fascination by users with text-based systems.
1. Who is going to manage the Internet server (a task as vast as current computer management in schools)?
 2. The meshing of pedagogy with technology:
 - Are the educational outcomes worth investing in the process at all, which is constantly changing?
 - What ethical practice or standards of Internet use need to be in place?
 - How can students and teachers cope with the 'quick sand-sinking feeling' or the shifting sands of the Internet?
 - How can students and teachers cope with working with others in different time windows (time zones)?
 - Education as a social activity: How much technology can teachers and students endure?
 - What is the educational value of text-based virtual reality, virtual communities and virtual environments (VEs)?
 - What collaborative projects or activities can be used in VEs?
 - Virtual Meeting spaces for teachers (desktop conferencing)
 - Tutorial support for classroom teaching
 - Tutorial support for distance teaching
 - Environments for 'Just-in-time' Open Learning
 - Learning by doing educational environments eg constructivism
 - Spatial organisation of information retrieval
 - Dynamics of interactions in a virtual space

- Social and Political issues in virtual worlds
 - From Laboratory work at school to Collaboratory work across the Internet.
3. What rural Internet re-training opportunities exist when last year's Internet training has reached its 'use-by' date?
 4. How will the local school population and the community support improved access to the Internet?
 5. Are the costs prohibitive or do other priorities compete (eg textbooks) at the moment?
 6. Is there any educational penalty for 'holding back' a while?

Communications technology can do similar enhancements for the teaching and research activities where a simple Collaboratory Model using WWW, email and MOO is used to augment communication amongst educators, spread across several time zones.

4. K-12 RURAL ACCESS CASE STUDY

Since late 1994, the Internet Special Projects Group has been working with the Charles Sturt University, Division of Information Technology (DIT) in providing Internet access and information pages for rural schools in NSW and north-east Victoria.

Ken Eustace and Paul Wood-Bradley developed the Local Schools Page Prototype WEB System of pages as a computing research project (Eustace 1995) sponsored by the Information Systems division at Toshiba in 1994-95, with Charles Sturt University (CSU) providing the Internet access via dial-up 14.4kbs modems. The Education and K-12 Schools Page and email directory is now maintained by DIT at CSU.

As a result of these efforts and the work of Ken Davis at Gumly Gumly Public School and other teachers at the following schools, you can now visit each school on the Internet.

George McLean at Batlow Technology School is working with a new ISP in Tumut to bring affordable Internet access to the school from July 1996.

K-12 SCHOOLS WITH HOME PAGES VIA CSU

(NOTE: the following schools are all in the same directory)

<i>Bandiana Primary School</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/bandi-ps/bandiana.htm>
<i>Cowra Public School</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/cowra-ps/>
<i>Gumly Gumly Public School</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/gumly-ps/>
<i>Junee North Public</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/junno-ps/>
<i>North Wagga Public</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/nowag-ps/>
<i>Oberon High School</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/obero-hs/hmepge.htm>
<i>Sturt Public School, Wagga</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/sturt-ps/>
<i>The Scots School, Bathurst</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/scots/tsshmp.htm>
<i>Turvey Park Public School, Wagga</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/turve-ps/>
<i>Xavier High School, Albury</i>	<http://www.csu.edu.au/schools/xavie-hs/zavmad.htm>

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES

Eustace, K. (1995). 'Redefining the Walls of the Classroom.' Expanding the Horizons Conference Proceedings, Bond University, Gold Coast, Australia, August 23-25, 1995.

Eustace, K. (1994). Interactive Education: Distributed hypermedia and the networking of students on the World-Wide-Web. *COM3: Journal of the Computing in Education Group of Victoria*, 21 (1/2), June: 4-8.

Ken Eustace teaches a range of information technology subjects in the School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., Australia. Ken is also the virtual classroom 'wizard' at *AussieMOO* at

<MOO telnet://silo.riv.csu.edu.au : 7777 @go #1019>.

Ken may be contacted via email at <keustace@csu.edu.au>.

A WWW version of this paper is located at the URL <<http://www.csu.edu.au/research/sda/Papers/rural.html>>.

© Lyceum Project, 1996

NETDAY '96: EXTENDING THE INTERNET WITH VOLUNTEERS AND DONATIONS

Steve Cisler

Manager, Network Outreach,
Apple Computer, Inc., California, United States

It takes a village to wire a school -- or so it would seem after NetDay '96, an event billed as a high tech barn raising to wire all the schools in California with a high capacity LAN as an important step in connecting them to the Internet. This project began in 1995 with John Gage of Sun Microsystems and Michael Kaufman of KQED television in San Francisco deciding that something had to be done to cut through all the bureaucracy and endless discussions about the barriers to wiring up schools in the US. Enlisting the support of Tom Kalil at the White House (whose email signature file reads 'Just Do It') they found willing allies in the Clinton Administration which has had a long-standing commitment to extending the Net even to that famous virtual little girl in Carthage, Tennessee, who is forever looking for dinosaur information from Library of Congress.

The original plan that was hatched in the summer of '95 outlined in rough detail how ten technical volunteers, working all day on Saturday, March 8, would be able to string category 5 wiring in five classrooms and a school library and lay the foundation for a good LAN and Internet connection. The job would be to encourage industry, communities, and any other groups that could help to replicate this all over the state. The organizers were averse to having a lot of meetings or planning sessions when this was first endorsed by Clinton during a visit to schools and a museum in the San Francisco area in September 1995. Gage said he wanted to use the Net to organize the event: no office, no paid staff, everything decentralized with most of the coordination taking place with email and Web pages. As the *San Jose Mercury News* for September 21, 1995, noted, 'No public funds will be used, and no committee meetings will be held, planners say. The Internet will permit volunteers to just show up and do it.'

However, the sheer number of challenges, the need to educate (and convince) school administrators, teachers, and the public about the event, led to a massive PR campaign on the part of the NetDay organizers, as well as subsequent visits by Gore, Clinton and finally on March 8, 1996, the core of the Administration interested in networking issues. There were many meetings involving teachers, industry, volunteers, and school administrators.

To help people find out more about the event a web site was set up by The WELL <<http://www.netday96.com>> where anyone could search a map of the state linked to a database, find a school, see who had volunteered, who was organizing the event, and who the principal was. A prospective volunteer could list her contact information and describe her skills in the database. As the volunteer base increased, the icons for each school would change: a red dot on the map of California indicated no volunteers; yellow meant that four or less had signed up; and green meant they probably had a good complement built up. Using the zoom feature (or search by name or street) you can inspect each school in the district. My son attends a middle school in the Moreland School District in San Jose, and I was able to zoom to the street level and find his school. However, the map and database don't reflect much more than who had volunteered. It does not show that a school is already wired, that it's undergoing renovation for asbestos or inadequate electrical wiring, or that they have no plans to wire it. This led people to make judgments from the map where many dots were red and only schools in the high tech areas like Silicon Valley were almost solid green. I encourage you to look at the site because it is a great attempt to make use of the Net for collaboration, for information dissemination on a specific project, and because of the simple but effective GIS system employed. However, it does not reflect the whole picture.

Some people signed up for a school because the volunteers were Internet users, had heard about the event on the Net, and genuinely wanted to help. But the school was not online, and the principal may not have even known about the event or that people had signed up to help. Indeed, a few people showed up at some schools where the gates were locked and nothing happened.

In our area, Smart Valley <<http://www.svi.org>>, a non-profit organisation that is undertaking a number of ambitious networking projects in Silicon Valley, including Challenge 2000 (systemic education reform) and Smart Valley Public Access Network (Web browsers in public places such as health clinics, halfway houses, and libraries) decided to cooperate with the NetDay organizers. With John Gage and Bill Clinton twisting arms, a number of businesses and organizations joined in that probably would not have, had it just been Sun Microsystems beating the drum for this project. Once committed, Smart Valley organized an array of events, training sessions and worked with local companies like Pacific Bell, 3Com, Apple, Cisco that provided equipment, funds, support, and perhaps most important hundreds of volunteers for the event. They also tried to ensure that the schools with less savvy about the Net were not left out.

The media that covered this whole process, especially the *San Jose Mercury News*, played up the angle that 'The Rich Get Richer' and while that seemed to be a pattern in some parts of the state, Smart Valley tried to equalize benefits for the schools in their area. One of the problems for a volunteer-based project is that the organizers don't have much leverage when the unpaid workers are deployed. Most want to work in the school attended by their kid, or at least in a school not far from home. The schools in Palo Alto, Mountain View, and Cupertino, which have many parents from high tech firms drew many volunteers. Some had far too many to be used effectively, while some inner city schools and many rural ones had few or nobody to help out. Some detractors felt the project was like a South Pacific cargo cult or a UFO landing pad in someone's back yard: if you install the infrastructure, benefits will rain from the sky; kids will get a 21st century education, as access to the Net magically raises all boats and all the test scores! Another complaint for technology projects in general is that the community is not involved in any discussion prior to the introduction of the technology. Parents may want to debate where it is a good idea to spend money on networking when the school library is in bad shape or when the teacher to student ratio is more than 30 to 1. NetDay was conceived at high levels, not at the school level where the parents feel they have more input.

My son's school is in an area where many parents work for electronics or telecommunications firms, and the parent technical committee reflects that. Most California schools are suffering in various ways, and that includes my son's, but they do have strong commitment from the parents. In 1995, the school and parents spent over 600 hours and \$15,000 in purchased and donated networking equipment to wire up the middle school. The computer teacher sent The White House his spreadsheet to show just how much work it would be to wire a school, and noted how it went far beyond what was initially promised by the NetDay promoters.

As the March 8 date approached, the NetDay organizers began holding many more meetings, toning down the promises that all schools would be wired, and finally began getting buy in from administrators and teachers at the local level. It was my impression that initially they saw the profession as a block to their effort to bring connectivity to the schools even though they had the support of Superintendent of Education Delaine Eastin and a number of district superintendents. The California State Library was not involved.

Many schools had teams of volunteers come in before the March 8 date to do wiring, some like Ygnacio Valley High School in Concord, California, where I used to do book talks as a YA librarian, had a lot of help because Clinton and Gore were headed there to help pull cable (red, white, and blue of course), make a talk, and help boost the projects and the 150 volunteers at that one school. I went to a middle school in Alum Rock School District across town in East San Jose. Although the database indicated there were only four volunteers, I arrived to find at least thirty, divided into teams, with 8th graders signing people up, handing out t-shirts and running errands for some of the work groups. Our team installed Ethernet cards in the Macs in the classrooms, the library, and the school office. As you know, there are fewer school librarians and media specialists employed here than ever before. The library is almost a symbolic place of learning and with the arrival of the Net, some think it's outmoded. Scott McNealy, the CEO of Sun Microsystems commented, 'Books - that's antique. That's not the way to find anything' as he gestured to the library shelves during a speech at Overfelt High School in San Jose.

After the day ended, there were numerous stories on television and newspapers, some questioning the value and others praising the great outpouring of assistance by the public and business community for school networks. I felt the grassroots aspect of the project was very beneficial, and most principals did as well. Some were unable to use volunteers because of liability risks, and others just did not have the time or expertise to put together a plan to take advantage of the volunteers who wanted to help.

There are numerous plans to take this further in California and elsewhere. Many schools are planning netdays later this year, and some even use the motto 'Every Day is NetDay'. The Smart Schools project in Smart Valley plans to continue to wire up all the schools in this area because they know how important the equity issue is. There are also plans to do this in North Carolina <<http://www.explor.net.org>> and in the Fall in Connecticut. Richard Akeroyd, Connecticut State Librarian, alerted me that he is involved in his state's effort where public libraries are included in the project.

Before the Public Library Association conference in Portland I discussed NetDay with various state librarians as well as the attendees at a preconference on community networking and asked them to consider a similar project aimed at public libraries. I believe that such efforts might better start at the grass roots level rather than in the board room of a company or in the offices at ALA. I believe the reference staff and the library directors should be involved from the beginning and not swept along after a media blitz by sponsoring companies and national groups. Quite honestly, some librarians object strongly to this sort of project. They believe strong support from the state or local government is crucial to the sustained health of libraries and no high tech photo op and an army of volunteers will do very much for our institution.

I would argue that they are right; a one time media spectacle won't begin to solve some of the library world's problems, but it can raise awareness of the issues and can involve many members of the public who would never join a friends of the library group or perhaps even check out a book. Over 17,000 volunteers helped out in California, and every principal and teacher I spoke with were surprised and pleased that people from all over the community came to help out. George Datz, Research Director for the California School Employees Association, said his organization did not want to be used as an excuse to prevent volunteers for this project ('The Union is against it, but we'd love to otherwise.') Instead he and many members took part and helped make it a success from his standpoint. Datz as well as many other professionals know that there is much to do in terms of training, acquiring adequate machines or upgrading older computers, and integrating the Net into curriculum. Van Wilkinson, Director for Technology and Development in the Shasta County Office of Education in Redding, California, said the event was a 'fuse' to light the way toward ongoing efforts. I know the library world can benefit from the sort of exposure that schools received. I hope a few librarians will explore the idea of starting something in their states, and I'd like to hear from those who are interested in kickstarting NetDay projects for public libraries at the state level.

Originally published under the title 'NetDay 96.' in Library Journal 121 (9): 22-23. May 15, 1996.

Steve Cisler is Manager of the Network Outreach, part of the Advanced Technology Group of Apple Computer, Inc. in Silicon Valley, California in the United States. Steve can be contacted via email at <sac@apple.com>.